



2004 Wetlands Reserve Program



Customer Focus

Gooseneck Cove, located in Newport, Rhode Island is a salt marsh and lagoon estuary that drains into Rhode Island Sound. Until the early decades of this century, Gooseneck Cove and other salt marshes in Rhode Island were an important part of the agricultural landscape. Salt marshes were used both for pasture and for the production of salt marsh hay. Over the last hundred years, construction of two road crossings and a dam in the cove caused significant habitat and water quality degradation.

Since 2002, USDA NRCS has been working with its partners: Save The Bay, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, the City of Newport and adjacent property owners to develop a plan to restore the salt marsh and water quality of the cove. The plan will address the following impacts identified by the partners: harmful algae blooms, and ongoing subsidence of the salt marsh due to impounded water. The algae blooms and the subsidence will be corrected by recreating the natural tidal hydrology. An additional impact to the cove is the invasion of the salt marsh by the Common reed, *Phragmites australis*. The invasion of the *Phragmites* is caused by salinity levels being too low, thus creating conditions suitable for invasive plants to flourish and native plants to die. Recreating the natural hydrology will also remedy this impact to the cove. This very complex project will be funded through the NRCS Wetland Reserve Program, and our partners at a cost of \$750,000. Project partners anticipate that significant positive ecological benefits to plant and animal communities will occur by restoring tidal flow to this 108 acre cove and salt marsh. The project is now in the engineering design stage, with work to be completed by 2006.

Rhode Island Summary

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program is designed to restore and protect wetlands on private property. It is an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agricultural land. WRP also serves to provide fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality, protect biological diversity and provide recreational opportunities.

Accomplishments

In 2004 NRCS entered into one agreement for the purchase of a 26-acre easement and the enhancement of a 10-acre wetland on the Barton Farm in the City of Warwick. The City of Warwick purchased the historic dairy farm to prevent it from being slated for development. This will be the first easement purchased in Rhode Island through the Wetlands Reserve Program.

NRCS continued the design and planning of several other projects in 2004 including the Walker Farm, a 20-acre salt marsh restoration project, and Cormorant Point, a 10-acre salt marsh restoration project.

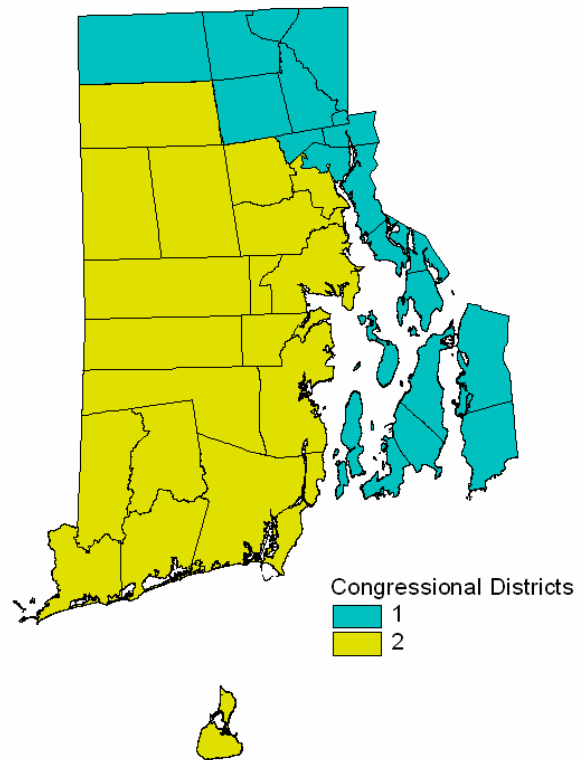
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Rhode Island's WRP Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District



Rhode Island WRP Dollars and Contracts (includes inactive or cancelled contracts)

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2004		Cumulative Total (97-04)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1			95,000	2
District 2	280,000	1	330,991	3
State Totals	280,000		425,991	5

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